Israeli Politics Seminar

Spring 2016
Class meets Mondays 12-2:30 in Naftali 104
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The more than six decades of Israel's democratic system of government, under intense external and internal pressures, have been facilitated by four major characteristics of its society and politics. First, a cultural aspect: a commitment to a national coalescent orientation on the part of the majority of Israeli population, stemming from sentiments of Jewish solidarity and from the tradition of multi party democratic politics inherited from the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine prior to 1948. Second, a structural aspect: multiplicity of crosscutting social cleavages that provide for the diffusion of tensions stemming from internal social conflict. Third, an economic aspect: availability of external resources such as US foreign aid programs, German reparations and Jewish donations. Those made it possible to allocate resources beyond what was extracted from society. And, forth, a political aspect: oligarchic inclinations of political elites composed of professional politicians, whose common interests have been to avoid ideological controversies and political confrontations among themselves.

In the early days of the state a serious concern was raised: can Israel survive as a democracy facing the difficulties resulting from mass immigration, meager resources, internal divisions and external threats to its very existence? By the early 1970s, such concerns largely dissipated. The Israeli body-politic has proven cohesive enough to overcome tensions stemming from fragmented party politics, deep social and cultural cleavages, fundamental ideological schisms and an involvement in protracted conflicts with neighboring states and the Palestinians.

These achievements were facilitated by the emergence of a pattern of politics, indeed, a political culture, that puts a strong emphasis on the pursuit of political accommodation among social groupings, political parties and ideological strands even at the expense of compromising their respective manifest interests, aspirations and programs. Moreover, the mobilization capabilities of Israel's governments have been remarkable by any standard. They were capable of inducing the citizens to accept willingly such burdens as high taxation, harsh economic measures and long conscript and reserve military service. Israel has done all these without loss of public support for its central political and social institutions.

Seminar objectives
The seminar has three major objectives. First, we will analyze the major features of Israel's political system and compare it to other democratic countries. Second, we will examine the question of democracy under stress - the politics of a state striving to be Jewish and Democratic. Third, we will relate the theories studied in class to day-to-day contemporary Israeli politics (students will be expected to be up-to-date concerning the current events in Israeli politics). All this will be done within the analytic framework of the analysis of conflicts and their resolution, with some application in practice.

Seminar assignments
- Active participation in negotiation and mediation sessions
- A midterm exam.
- A weekly discussion leadership of readings + Israeli politics (in groups – signup sheet)

- A seminar paper – by the end of the semester, each student will submit a paper (20 pages, double spaced, 12 font) which will include her/his analysis of a research question concerning Israeli politics. The individual meetings along the semester will help students crystalize a research question and develop their research design.
- Presentation of seminar papers during the last 2-3 sessions of the class.

Breakdown of final grade
Class Participation (reading scholarly work and following the news)   30%
Midterm Exam   20%
Final Presentation   20%
Seminar paper   30%

Seminar Outline and Readings

February 29 - Introduction, Syllabus, Seminar Overview, Sign up for Discussion Leadership

March 7 - **Toward Statehood: The Zionist Movement and the Jewish Community in Palestine Prior to 1948**
D. Horowitz & M. Lissak, "Authority without Sovereignty: The Case of the National Center of the Jewish Community in Palestine", **Government and Opposition**, 8, 1 (Winter 1973): 48-71.
E. Ya'ar "Change and Continuity in Israeli Society The Test of the Melting Pot", Israel Studies, 10(2), Summer 2005: 91-128
A. Arian, **Politics in Israel: The Second Generation,** Chaham House, N.J., 1989: 1-29.

March 14 - **Immigration, Political Culture and Israel's Society**
K. Goldstein & Z. Gitelman, "From "Russians" to Israelis?" in A. Arian & M. Shamir (eds), **The Elections in Israel – 2003**, Transaction, New Brunswick (US) & London (UK): 245-60.
D. Hacohen, **Immigrants in Turmoil**, Syracuse University Press, 2003, Chapter 8: Immigration During 1948-1998 and its Ramifications on Israeli Society: 251-63.
T. Horowitz, "The Integration of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union", **Israel Affairs**, Taylor & Francis Group 11(1), January 2005: 117-36.
Y. Yonah, "Israel As a Multicultural Democracy: Challenges and Obstacles", **Israel Affairs**, Taylor & Francis Group, 11(1), January 2005: 95-116.
M. Lissak, "The Unique Approach to Military-Societal Relations in Israel and its Impact on Foreign and Security Policy", in S.Sofer (ed), **Peacemaking in a Divided Society: Israel After Rabin**, Frank Cass, London 2001: 235-55.
Y. Peri, **Telepopulism: Media and Politics in Israel**, Stanford University Press, California, 2004, Introduction; 1-10.
J. T. Shuval, "The Structure and Dilemmas of Israeli Pluralism" in B.Kimmerling, **The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries & Frontiers**, State University of New York, 1989: 216-36.
Zvi Zameret, **The Melting Pot in Israel**, State University of New York, 2002, Chapter 14: Summing Up: Israel – From a "Melting Pot" to a Pluralistic State: 155-160.
* Watching *The Gatekeepers*

March 21 -– Individual Meetings about seminar papers

March 28 - **Israel's Legal System: Parliament, Executive and the Judiciary**
* Meeting with MK Michal Biran
Gregory S. Mahler, **Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State**, Rowmen & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Oxford 2004, Chapter 4: The Constitutional System and Parliamentary Government: 117-39, and Chapter 8: The Machinery of Government: 221-47.
M. Edelman, "The Judicialization of Politics in Israel", **International Political Science Review**, 1994, 15: 177-86.

Y. Yishi, "Legislators and Interest Groups: Some Observation on the Israeli Scene", **The Journal of Legislative Studies** 1997 3(2): 89-111.
D. Korn, "The Presidentialization of Politics: The Power and Constraints of the Israeli Prime Minister", 2010
www.israelistudies.umd.edu-articles-research-paper-2.pdf
N. Chazan, "The Knesset", **Israel Affairs**, 11(2), April 2005: 392-416

April 4 - **Elections and Voting**
V. Bogdanor, "The Electoral System, Government and Democracy", in E. Sprinzak & L. Diamond (eds) **Israel Democracy Under Stress**, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder and London 1993: 83-106.
A. Brichta (1998), 'The New Premier-Parliamentary System in Israel', **Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences**, 555: 180-92.
R. Y. Hazan (1997), "Executive-Legislative Relations in an Era of Accelerated Reform: Reshaping Government in Israel", **Legislative Studies Quarterly**, 22: 329-50.
A. Lijphart, "Israeli Democracy and Democratic Reform in Comparative Perspective", in E. Sprinzak & L. Diamond (eds), **Israel Democracy Under Stress**, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder and London 1993: 107-23.
Gregory S. Mahler**, Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State**, Rowmen & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Oxford 2004, Chapter 7: The Electoral Process and Voting Behavior: 193-219.
Y. Peres & S. Shemer, 'The Ethnic Factor in Elections' in D. Caspi, A. Diskin & E. Gutmann (eds), **The Roots of Begin's Success**, St. Martin's Press, New York 1984: 89-111
M. Shamir & A. Arian, "Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel", **American Political Science Review**, 1999, 93(2): 265-277.

April 11 – Individual meetings about seminar paper (throughout the week)

April 20 – midterm exam

May 2 - **Parties and Interest Groups**
* 1st Negotiation and Mediation Session
A. Arian & M. Shamir, "On Mistaking a Dominant Party in a Dealingnment System" in A. Arian & M. Shamie (eds), **The Election in Israel – 2003,** Transaction New Brunswick (USA) & London (UK) 2005: 13-31.
G.Goldberg (1998), "Trade Unions and Party Politics in Israel: The Decline of Party Identification", **The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies**, 23(1): 51-70.
G. S. Mahler**, Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State,** Rowmen & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Oxford 2004, Chapter 6: Political Parties and Interest Groups: 171-91.
J. Mendilow, **Ideology, Party Change and Electoral Campaigns in Israel**, State University of New York, 2003, Introduction: 1-25.
Y. Yishi, "Bringing Society Back In: Post-Cartel Parties in Israel", **Party Politics**, 2001, 7(6): 667-687
G. Rahat, "Intra-Party Politics"
www.idi.org.il/sites/english/ResearchAndPrograms/elections09/Pages/Intra-PartyPolitics.aspx

The State/Religion Issue: Judaism in the Jewish State
A. Cohen & B. Susser, 'From Accommodation to Decision: Transformation in Israel's Religio-Political Life', **Journal of Church and State**, 1996, 38: 817-39.
I. Englard, 'Law and Religion in Israel', **The American Journal of Comparative Law,** 1987, 35: 185-208.
G. S. Mahler**, Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State**, Rowmen & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Oxford 2004, Chapter 2: Zionism, Religion and the Domestic Political Environment: 53-88.
Chaim I. Waxman, "Religio-Poilitics and Social Unity in Israel: Israel's Religious Parties" in Robert O.Freedman (Ed), **Israel's First Fifty Years**, Florida University Press Gaineville 2000: 162-79.

May 3 – *class trip to the Knesset*

May 9 - **Coalition Politics in Israel**
* 2nd Negotiation and Mediation Session
Dan Horowitz, 'More than a Change in Government', **The Jerusalem Quarterly**, 5, 1977: 3-20.
G. S. Mahler, **Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State**, Rowmen &
Littlefield Publishers Inc. Oxford 2004, Chapter 5: The Prime Minister and the Knesset: 141-69.
G. S. Mahler & R. Trilling, "Coalition Behaviour and Cabinet Formation: The Case of Israel",
Comparative Political Studies, 1975, 8: 200-233.
N. Yanai (1986), "Critical Aspects of the 1984 Elections in Israel: The Crisis of Coalition Forming Politics
and the Government of   National Unity", **Journal of International and Area Studies**, 1: 151-174.

May 16 -
The Socio-Economic Cleavage in Israel and the Protest Movement of the Summer of 2011
Oz Almog, "Shifting the Centre from Nation to Individual and Universe: The New "Democratic Faith" of
Israel", in E. Karsh (Ed) **Israel: The First Hundred Years**, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2002: 31-42.
D. Bernstein & S. Swirski, "The Rapid Economic Development of Israel and the Emergence of the Ethnic
Division of Labour", **British Journal of Sociology**, XXII (March 1982), No. 1
Ofira Seliktar, "The Changing Political Economy of Israel: From Agricultural Pioneers to the "Silicon
Valley" of the Middle East", in Robert O.Freedman (ed), **Israel First Fifty Years**, Florida University
Press, Gaineville, 2000: 197-218.
B.Zilberfarb, "From Socialism to Free Market – The Israeli Economy 1948-2003", **Israel Affairs**, Taylor &
Francis Ltd, 11(1), January 2005: 12-22

May 23 – **Public Policy in Israel**
D.Korn**, Public Policy in Israel: Perspectives and Practices**, Lexington Books ,2002, Introduction: 1-6.
E. Don-Yehiya, 'Public Policy and Management of Major Political Cleavages' in D.Korn (ed**) Public Policy
in Israel: Perspectives and Practices**, Lexington Books, 2002: 9-30
D. Nachmias & O. Arbel-Ganz, 'The Crisis of Governance: Government Instability and the Civil Servics',
Israel Affairs, 11(2), April 2005: 281-302.
D. Peretz & G. Doron, **Government and Politics of Israel**, Harper Collins Publishers Inc. 1997, Chapter
7: Government Administration and Public Policy: 208-43.
I. Sharkansky, "Israel's Political Economy" in E.Sprinzak & L. Diamond (eds), **Israel Democracy Under
Stress**, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1993: 153-70.
* 3rd Negotiation and Mediation Session

May 30 – Presentations

June 6 – Double class (11-4) – Presentations; Final papers due